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CIA Doc

SECRET

Cease-Fire Developments

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Cease-Fire Developments

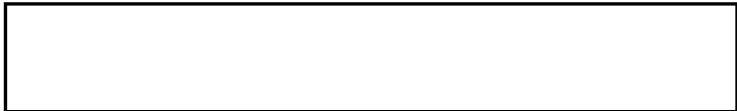
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General Tra Replaced

The Viet Cong Liberation Radio announced on 13 May that Major General Hoang Anh Tuan would replace General Tran Van Tra as head of the PRG delegation to the Two Party Joint Military Commission. Tuan previously was Tra's deputy. The broadcast gave no information about a new assignment for Tra. He left Saigon to return to Hanoi in late March presumably for fresh instructions. Hanoi Radio announced that he had concluded his visit on 20 April. Tra's replacement by Tuan appears to represent a downgrading of the Joint Military Commission by the Communists. The commission was able to make little progress on the issues before it during Tra's absence, and the Communists have from the start refused to staff field teams that would bring their delegation up to full strength.

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CAMBODIAThe Military Situation

Yesterday's demonstration for back pay by some 500 troops of the elite 7th Division in Phnom Penh is another example of the administrative problems that continue to plague the Cambodian Army. Most of the protesting troops had been recently assigned to the division and are still being paid by a central authority rather than the division itself. The original soldiers of the 7th Division have been paid, but for some unknown reason, the newly arrived personnel have not. The division's commander has promised that henceforth the troops would be paid promptly.

Military activity remains relatively light. Government forces have reopened Route 30 southeast of Phnom Penh against only light Communist resistance. Some progress has also been reported in government attempts to clear a stretch of Route 26 some 20 miles west of Phnom Penh. In the south, government forces have made some headway in expanding the defensive perimeter around the southern provincial capital of Takeo, but the Communists are still shelling Takeo with medium range weapons. [REDACTED]

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LAOSUS Aircraft Still Missing

Search aircraft have failed to locate a US contract transport plane and its US pilot missing in Communist-held territory in north Laos since 7 May. Senior Communist negotiator Phoumi Vongvichit said on 10 May he would inform the US Embassy in Vientiane as soon as Communist headquarters in Sam Neua responded to Charge Dean's request for information on the missing aircraft.

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INTERNATIONALChinese Support for a Coalition Government

In an impressive gesture of support for the concept of a coalition government in Vientiane, Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei attended a recent Lao National Day reception in Peking. The event had passed unmentioned in the Chinese press for several years.

Perhaps sensing that a cease-fire in Laos was a real possibility, Peking began seeking warmer relations with Souvanna's government last summer by proposing an exchange of ambassadors. A new Lao envoy arrived in Peking in November, and the Chinese will almost certainly reciprocate when a new Lao coalition is negotiated. In fact, Peking may have intended Chi's attendance to be a sign of Chinese encouragement for the early formation of a new government in Vientiane.

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